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First name: Christopher

Last name: Lish

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Sunday, August 4, 2019

David Whittekiend

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache Forest Supervisor

857 West South Jordan Parkway

South Jordan, UT 84095

Subject: Protect fragile, high elevation alpine basins in the High Uintas Wilderness. Select the no grazing option in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. -- High Uintas Wilderness Domestic Sheep Analysis Project (Ashley and UWC National Forests) #44503

To Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest Supervisor David Whittekiend:

I support the no grazing option in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) because it is best for the wildlife, watersheds, recreation, and the High Uintas Wilderness.

"Our duty to the whole, including to the unborn generations, bids us to restrain an unprincipled present-day minority from wasting the heritage of these unborn generations. The movement for the conservation of wildlife and the larger movement for the conservation of all our natural resources are essentially democratic in spirit, purpose and method."

-- Theodore Roosevelt

The High Uintas Wilderness contains about 455,000 acres in the Uinta Mountains in northeastern Utah. Unfortunately, the High Uintas has more livestock grazing than any other Wilderness in the country. Years of extensive grazing by domestic sheep has displaced native wildlife, marred the landscape, compromised water quality, and negatively impacted visitors seeking solitude in a wilderness setting. Furthermore, grazing is causing growing conflicts with a slowly recovering native bighorn sheep population.

"Our government is like a rich and foolish spendthrift who has inherited a magnificent estate in perfect order, and then has left his fields and meadows, forests and parks to be sold and plundered and wasted."

-- John Muir

The U.S. Forest Service proposal to permit over 10,000 sheep and their lambs to graze for over two months every summer in the fragile, high elevation alpine basins of the Wilderness is wrong on so many levels. Already, livestock are allowed the graze on about sixty percent of the Wilderness. One of the ten allotments being evaluated, Fall Creek, has not been grazed since 1977, which was before the area was designated as Wilderness, and should be kept in non-use status.

"It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment."

-- Ansel Adams

The Forest Service also wrongly alleges that closing these sheep allotments would not help native bighorn sheep despite the fact that bighorns spend almost all of their time on the National Forest (rather than nearby private or Bureau of Land Management-administered land). The recently reintroduced bighorn population is expanding into the area of domestic sheep allotments, which are all part of the bighorns' native range. Bighorns and domestic sheep cannot co-exist because domestic sheep transmit diseases for which bighorns have little defense.

"As we peer into society's future, we--you and I, and our government--must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for our own ease and convenience the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow."

-- Dwight D. Eisenhower

The DEIS also fails to disclose how many predators, such as black bears, mountain lions, or coyotes are killed in the High Uintas Wilderness to protect domestic sheep, nor the effects continued sheep grazing has on the potential for recovering native predators such as wolves and grizzlies.

"Every man who appreciates the majesty and beauty of the wilderness and of wild life, should strike hands with the farsighted men who wish to preserve our material resources, in the effort to keep our forests and our game beasts, game-birds, and game-fish--indeed, all the living creatures of prairie and woodland and seashore--from wanton destruction. Above all, we should realize that the effort toward this end is essentially a democratic movement."

-- Theodore Roosevelt

Finally, I believe that grazing is inherently inimical to the goals of the Wilderness Act. Livestock have an adverse effect on the ecology of wilderness areas, in part due to trampling, water pollution, and conflict with native species. In addition, livestock grazing diminishes an area's "untrammelled" wilderness character and the opportunity for present and future generations to experience the unique benefits that authentic wilderness provides.

"With regard to areas of wilderness, we should be guardians not gardeners."

-- Howard Zahniser, author of the Wilderness Act

For all these reasons, I support the no grazing option in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement because it is best for the wildlife, watersheds, recreation and the High Uintas Wilderness.

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

-- Aldo Leopold

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. Please do NOT add my name to your mailing list. I will learn about future developments on this issue from other sources.

Sincerely,
Christopher Lish
San Rafael, CA